

# Malaysia has released thousands of genetically modified mosquitoes into a forest in an attempt to curb dengue fever.

About 6,000 sterile male lab mosquitoes were released in an uninhabited forest area in eastern [Malaysia](#) on December 21, according to the Institute for Medical Research.

Another 6,000 wild male *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes were also placed in the area for scientific comparison, it said in a statement. The experiment was "successfully" concluded on January 5.

The field test is meant to pave the way for the use of genetically engineered *Aedes aegypti* male mosquitoes to mate with females and produce no offspring or ones with shorter lives, thus curtailing the mosquito population.

Only female *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes spread dengue fever, which killed 134 people in Malaysia last year.

A similar trial in the Cayman Islands last year – the first time genetically modified mosquitoes have been set loose in the wild after years of laboratory experiments and hypothetical calculations – resulted in a dramatic drop in the mosquito population in a small area studied by researchers.

The plan has sparked criticism by some Malaysian environmentalists, who fear it might have unforeseen consequences, such as the inadvertent creation of uncontrollable mutated mosquitoes.

Critics also say such plans could leave a vacuum in the ecosystem that is then filled by another insect species, potentially introducing new diseases.